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Change is the key word these days. For my industry we are the backend of a two year downturn while most of the rest of the Oil and Gas Industry is finishing one year. It could easily be another year to see recovery – many companies and even their trade and/or professional associations face survival mode challenges.

The Internet has changed the world drastically within our lifetime and in particular over the past twenty years. We have gone from very regional societies to one that is larger intertwined in the Global Village. Social media in particular ensures issues can live online and create their own following – often consisting of self-declared stakeholders that have no direct physical or economic ties to the issue being challenged.

In particular the history of fossil fuels dates back to the 1700's with the use of coal for steam powered engines and creating the time period we now call the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution marks a major turning point in history; almost every aspect of daily life was influenced in some way. In particular, average income and population began to exhibit unprecedented sustained growth. Some economists say that the major impact of the Industrial Revolution was that the standard of living for the general population began to increase consistently for the first time in history,

Jump forward to the Age of Oil. Also known as the Oil Age or the Petroleum Age, it refers to the era in human history characterized by an increased use of petroleum in products and as fuel. Though unrefined petroleum has been used for various purposes since ancient times, it was during the 19th century that refinement techniques were developed and gasoline engines were created.

Growth has become the staple of the Global Village yet it remains inexorably tied to fossil fuels. Growth comprises wealth, technology and leisure time for society. No one talks about getting rid of growth yet we have no found no way to delink the two.

Growth in an economy can only be the result of three factors. First, is the rise in population. Each new person requires the basics of existence and production must expand to satisfy this demand. Second, innovation may lead to improved productivity which allows more to be created using the same amount of input as before. Efficiencies in the use of raw materials can also allow for growth with a fixed rate of consumption. For example, we can now store an hour of music on a minuscule piece of silicon. At the start of the recording era this was 20 lbs of shellac records. Third, we can increase the size of our economy by taking from others. This was blatant and explicit in the days of colonialism, but today is much more subtle.

So in coming full circle we have seen the last half of the 20th century as being one of full throttled capitalism. The Baby Boomers are the most affluent generation humankind has ever seen. The environment was viewed as the enemy and humans did everything they could to change it and to protect themselves. Out of the desire for unrelenting growth came the development of machines and technology such as computers to enhance productivity and add to the overall wellbeing of the average citizen. Today's generation

may be the Lost Generation. They face high unemployment rates; they have to live with their parents longer; they have families later; however they have the ability to affect change through online activism. We are seeing subtle changes that are becoming more and more prevalent – a greater concern for the environment as they see the environment as a good thing when it is in balance. Unbalancing it makes it dangerous and perhaps that can be linked to human development and the use of energy and resources. This seems natural given they are not tied personally in the same way to the last 100 years of the growth curve. Their influence affects politics. Certainly in Canada we see a more right wing libertarianism movement in the political parties being elected. Change means new balance is required in time and it means there will be different winners and losers. For now we can only hope to weather the downturn and see what the other side looks like.

Balance only appears for short periods of time. It is simply the crossing point to the next phase of chaos.

From The Thursday File

Of course I'll hurt you. Of course you'll hurt me. Of course we will hurt each other. But this is the very condition of existence. To become spring, means accepting the risk of winter. To become presence, means accepting the risk of absence.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry - The Little Prince